

AN INTRODUCTION TO LATERAL WORK...

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Lateral work (work on two tracks) will achieve even further engagement and lightness in your horse. Here we first discuss preparation of the horse on the ground (often dismissed BUT hugely beneficial) and then mounted.

WORK ON THE GROUND

In order to keep the horse's impulsion up, the rider should work at the trot in between some of the exercises below.

In the first exercise, the rider takes the reins off the horse's neck and holds them in one hand and, with the other hand, asks the horse's hindquarter to move away from the whip (Figure 8-1). This would be the first rudimentary work on turn on the forehand on the ground. The rider needs to be very patient and be glad with one or two steps where the horse's hindquarters move away from the whip. Spending just a couple of minutes, before and after riding the horse, would be a good time to help the horse master this exercise before proceeding to the next one. Figure 8-1B (right) shows a position easier for the horse to understand what is expected of him and, as the horse improves, the trainer can move closer to position A (left).

After the exercise above, one of the easiest ways to begin work on two tracks is with a head to the wall leg yield (Figure 8-2). The rider can get started (we will assume the rider will begin on the far side in this example) by taking the horse with the left hand on the reins moving on the wall and departing on a reverse and half-circle (stage 1); when the horse comes back to the wall the rider asks for a change in bend from the horse (stage 2) and asks for a leg yield head to the wall (stage 3) moving away from the rider. The exercise is at first performed at the walk, but the trainer moves to the trot as soon as the horse has understood the yielding at the walk. All these exercises should eventually be performed from both sides to teach the horse to move away from both "legs."

The next exercise that can be performed on the ground is the leg yield tail to the wall (Figure 8-3). First, the rider starts moving the horse away from the track (stage 1). Next, the trainer performs the equivalent of a half-halt on the ground (stage 2) and prepares the horse for the leg yield tail to

the wall (stage 3). In this exercise it is important to prevent the horse from leaving the track. The rider has to balance the forward movement with the sideways movement. If there is too much sideways angle the horse can get stuck and lose impulsion. If there is not enough angle then the horse will not sufficiently cross the hindquarters. Once again, the rider can begin at the walk and then move as quickly as possible into work at the trot.

INTRODUCTORY MOUNTED LATERAL WORK

Leg yielding is not an exercise required in most dressage tests but is an excellent training tool. The same is true of the turn on the forehand. In leg yielding the horse is bent away from the direction of movement (that is, the head and tail trail and the middle of the body leads). If the horse has learned the lessons well, during work on the ground, then the transition to mounted work will be more natural. Work on two tracks requires much feel on the part of the rider. The horse's forward motion is partially halted as the horse moves sideways on two tracks. It takes practice and patience to develop the feel needed so the horse will keep the required impulsion and still move on two tracks. Leg yielding is practiced first at the walk and then at the trot.

LEG YIELDING HEAD TO THE WALL

The easiest of all work on two tracks is the leg yield head to the wall. The reason it is so easy is that the rider only has to worry about the horse moving forward and laterally, as the horse cannot move forward past the wall. If the rider requires an angle that is too open the horse may lose impulsion and lose rhythm and possibly come to a stop. If the angle is too closed the horse will not cross the hindquarters.

A good way to perform the leg yielding head to the wall is to perform a reverse and half circle and asking for a change in bend as the horse comes to the wall (Figure 8-4) just as we saw in the work on the ground, as well as through a half circle and reverse (Figure 8-5).

In either case, as the horse approaches the wall, the rider performs a half-halt with the outside rein (the horse is bent to the right, away from the direction of movement and the outside rein here would be the left rein). The rider uses the inside leg (right) and

inside rein (right) to ask the horse to move laterally against the outside rein (left). Later, when the horse understands these aids, the exercise will be greatly improved by supporting the horse with the outside leg (left) behind the girth. That is, the horse is moving away from the rider's right leg. It does not really matter where the arena is in determining the inside or outside, but rather, it is the horse's bend that is considered.

The inside leg is used in such a way that the horse learns to move away from lighter and lighter aids. The inside rein is used by gentle, slow tugs directed toward the horse's outside hip. These should never degenerate into pulls, nor should they be necessary at every stride. In fact, no aids should continue to be applied as a general rule, once the horse has responded to what the rider desires. If the rider continues to apply non-needed aids, then the horse will not learn to respond to lighter aids.

The leg yield, head to the wall at the trot, is especially useful if the rider asks for a small angle opening but yet at a vigorous trot. As long as the horse is doing some crossing with the hindquarters the exercise is good. The rider can perform the leg yielding head to the wall using a posting trot. All the other leg yield exercises explained here can be performed at the posting trot too but the sitting trot is generally preferable.

If the angle is not too open, many steps can be carried out this way before straightening the horse out and performing a half circle and leg yield to the other direction. While in some ways the leg yield at the trot is harder, at least the horse does have more impulsion and it is more difficult for the horse to avoid the movement by backing up. The rider has to make sure to maintain good impulsion by not opening the angle of the leg yield too much. As the horse improves, the rider can also practice this exercise at the sitting trot, with a little less forward movement and a little more open angle.

After the horse performs this exercise well on both sides, the rider can demand execution of leg yield head to the wall with a change of direction (Figure 8-6). This is done at the walk. After 10 to 14 steps of correct execution of head to the wall at the walk, with the horse moving away from the right leg, for instance, the rider can start opening the angle more during the last few steps, until the horse comes 90 degrees away from the wall, continues moving away from the wall and is in position to return back to the opposite direction with a leg yield head to the wall to the left. As the horse improves, the rider may ask that the horse make several such changes in direction without losing the rhythm of the horse. This is a strictly walk only exercise.

At this point I would suggest that the rider work on the rest of the walk lateral movements described in this article, as well as the head to the wall at the trot, before performing the tail to the

Figure 8-1: Rider helps the horse move away from the whip on the ground

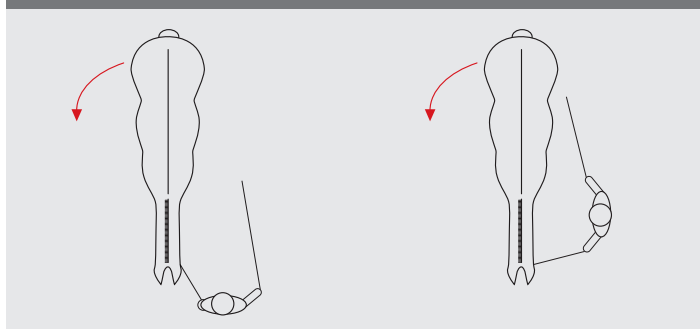
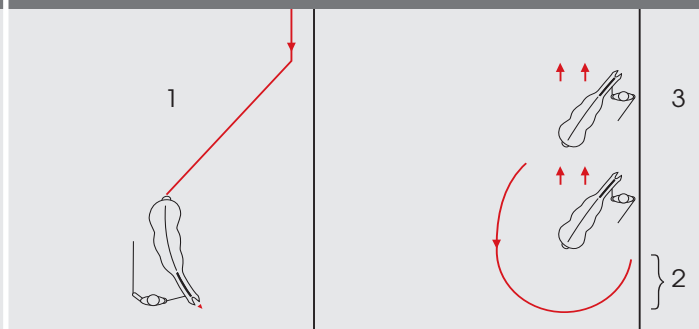
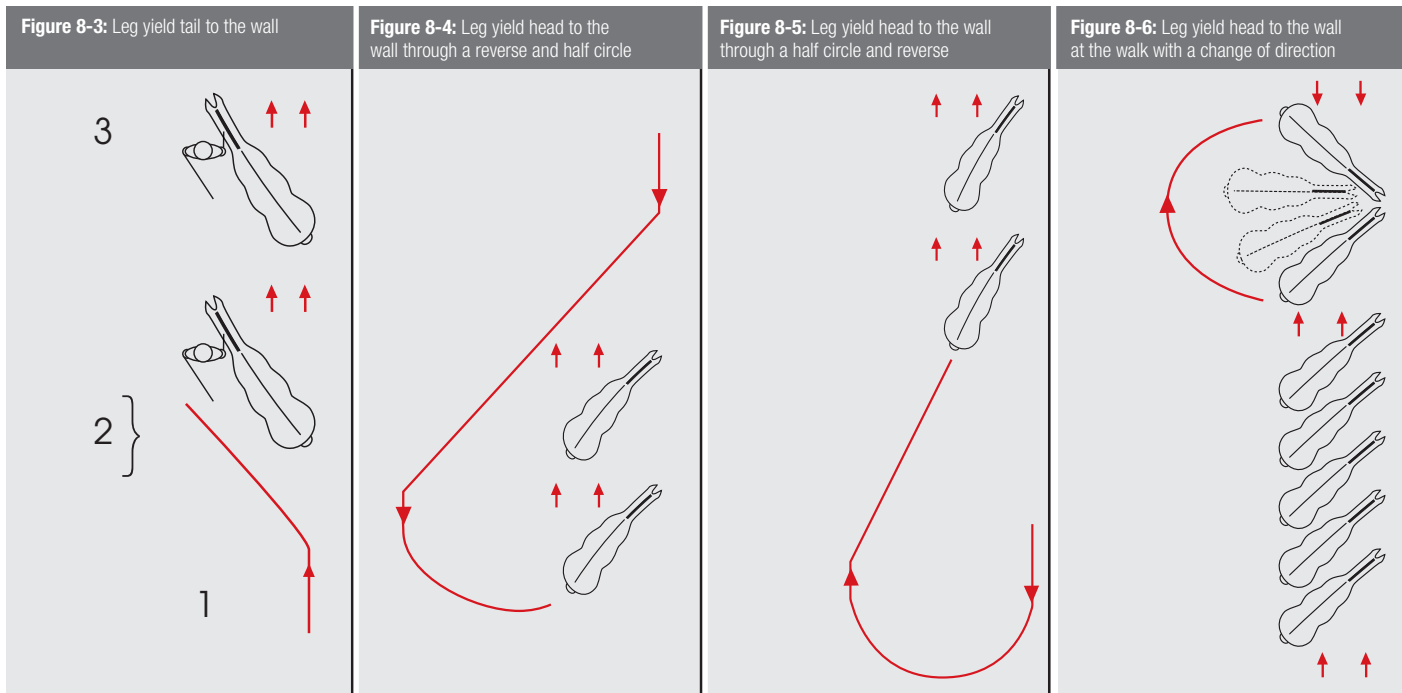


Figure 8-2: Leg yield head to the wall





wall exercise. Nevertheless, the tail to the wall is described here anyway.

LEG YIELDING TAIL TO THE WALL

In tail to the wall the rider has to, besides worrying about forward and lateral movement, prevent the horse from going forward off the track. The tail to the wall exercise is harder and probably best for one of the last exercises described here. It probably is best executed at the sitting trot although it can also be executed at the posting trot. During this exercise, the rider can come off the bend of a circle and continue to bend as if he were to perform a circle. After stepping a little into the circle the rider uses the outside rein to perform a half-halt, and asks the horse to move laterally - without leaving the wall - with the tail to the wall (Figure 8-7). The aids are the same as that of head to the wall. The rider uses the inside aids, leg and hand, to move the horse (here the left aids). The horse moves toward the outside and is held by the outside hand (the right). There is a minor resemblance

to the shoulder-in, however the left driving leg is placed behind the girth in the leg yield. After this exercise is improved at the walk, the rider can begin work at the posting trot.

HALF CIRCLE & LEG YIELD BACK TO THE WALL

The leg yield at the walk returning to the wall after a half circle (i.e., a half circle and reverse through leg yielding) is an excellent exercise. If the half circle is small enough at first the horse is more likely to succeed at this exercise. If the rider is going to perform a half circle to the right and leg yield back to the wall, he would ask for the bend away from the movement after the completion of the half circle (Figure 8-8). The horse, that is, was bent to the right during the circle but is asked to change bend to the left. The new inside leg (left) a little behind the girth would drive the horse forward and sideways (to the right, toward the wall) onto the outside rein (right). The outside rein would help guide the horse back to the wall and keep the two-track position. The inside rein (left) can be of

great help if used in a quiet, smooth, rhythmic way. The outside leg behind the girth (right), when the leg yielding is well established, helps improve the rhythm, impulsion and correctness of the movement. After this exercise is completed at the walk, the rider will perform it at the trot.

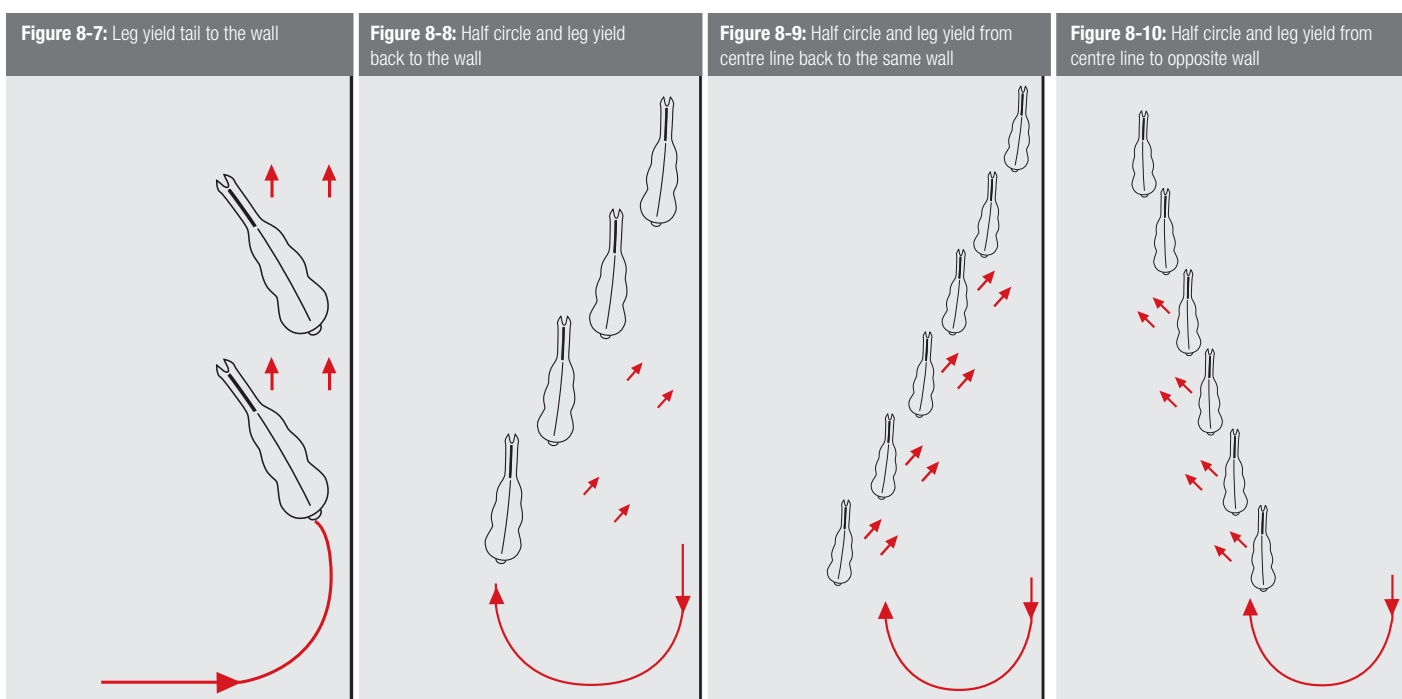
HALF CIRCLE TO CENTRE LINE & LEG YIELD AT THE WALK

Another excellent leg yielding exercise is leg yielding from the centre line after executing a larger half circle (Figure 8-9).

Also, the rider can choose to leg yield away from the original wall (Figure 8-10), maintain the bend in the same direction and travel to the opposite wall. One nice aspect of the latter variation is that the rider does not change the bend of the horse.

LEG YIELDING ON A CIRCLE AT THE WALK

Next, leg yielding can be executed on a circle at the walk. The key to work on walk circles on two tracks is obtaining enough impulsion. This exercise is probably one of the hardest in that it demands



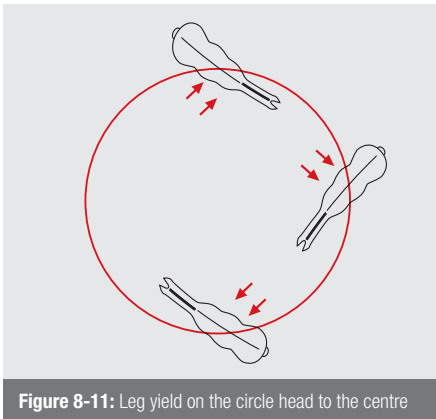


Figure 8-11: Leg yield on the circle head to the centre

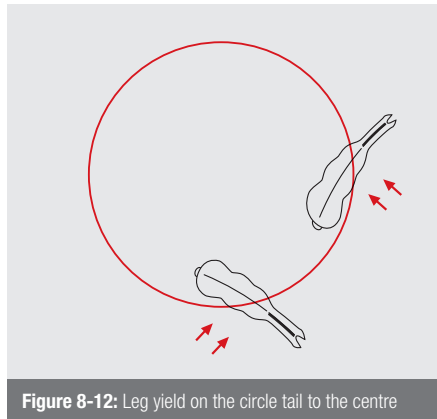


Figure 8-12: Leg yield on the circle tail to the centre

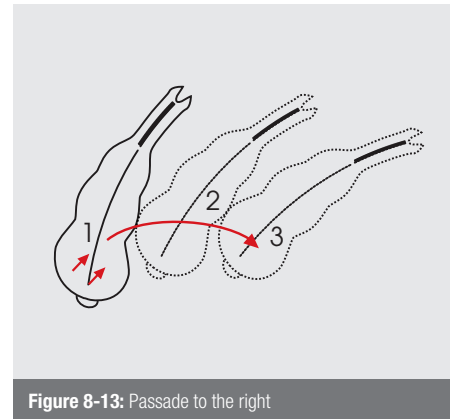


Figure 8-13: Passade to the right

high precision on the part of the rider in order not to change the size of the circle or the angle of bend around the circle. Two ways to execute this exercise are head to the inside of the circle (Figure 8-11) and tail to the inside (Figure 8-12). This work, as well as all other work on two tracks, should be performed to both sides (to the left and to the right).

PASSADE

Now that the horse responds to the leg, we can begin work on the passade. While the leg yield involves movement with the horse bent away from the direction of movement, the passade involves work with the horse bent so head and tail are bent toward the direction of movement instead of away. In contrast to the leg yield, the passade is always executed at the walk and is not an exercise ever required in dressage tests, at any level. In the passade, the rider requires the hindquarters to over-engage. In a way, the horse is exercising one part of the body over the rest - a part that often gets neglected. In the passade the rider feels the full crossing and engagement of the hindquarters and is one of those exercises that riders find easy to determine if the execution is correct from on top of the horse.

I have found this to be an excellent exercise to improve the engagement of the hindquarters and therefore begin to increase cadence and collection. Finally, the correct execution of the passade can help riders arrive at a correct turn on the haunches, as well as travers, renvers and half pass. Even though the exercise takes place at the walk, the benefits obtained carry over to other work at the trot and canter.

The rider asks the horse to move forward and sideways 3 to 8 steps. The hindquarters make a small circle. In the passade to the right (Figure 8-13), for instance, the rider uses the outside rein and leg (left) with the whip on the outside and asks the horse to move toward the inside (right). The weight of the rider is placed on inside hip. (The rider normally carries the whip on the inside, so this is an exception.)

Once the horse understand the passade to the right and to the left, independently, the maximum benefits from the exercise are obtained by the passade zigzag (Figure 8-14) where the rider asks the horse to transition between passade right and passade left. Two transitions to the right and two to the left are sufficient as the rider wants to terminate the exercise before the horse loses impulsion. In a correctly executed passade, the horse becomes lighter and the rider can feel the crossing over of the legs, especially the hindquarters.

Although I have described the aids for the passade above, riders will find that as the horse becomes more supple and obedient, the passade can also be obtained by obtaining a bend of the head with the inside rein set against the neck of

the horse and asking for the sideways movement with the outside leg. The outside rein can be used lightly and as needed. The horse becomes so light that is possible to almost continue on the passade solely with these diagonal aids and pressure on the inside riding bone. These same phenomena can be observed when executing the half-pass at the canter. At the half pass it is imperative that the hindquarter does not lead, however, while at the passade the hindquarter is asked to over engage and leads the movement.

TURN ON THE FOREHAND & HAUNCHES

The turn on the forehand is a good exercise when working the horse in hand as we saw earlier. Mounted, it helps the rider lighten the horse to the leg aids. The turn on the forehand is at times included - some feel incorrectly - at some lower level dressage tests in some countries. A good way of practicing the turn on the forehand is the half turn on the forehand. This can be executed by either bringing the horse to a complete halt before the turn begins, or by going right from the walk to the turn on the forehand. While the latter may take more co-ordination, the former is more difficult because much of the energy or impulsion from the movement can be lost once the horse is brought to the halt unless, that is, the horse is kept properly on the bit.

If one were riding to the right (the off side of the horse to the inside) a half turn on the forehand (Figure 8-15) without halting would be executed as follows: The horse is bent so the head and tail will trail the movement. The rider executes a half halt with the right rein. As the horse responds to the half halt the rider asks the horse to move away from the left leg with both the left leg and rein. The right rein supports the horse's movement and prevents the horse from moving forward. The right leg behind the girth helps regulate the speed and rhythm of the exercise. As soon as the horse has finished taking all the required steps and is facing the opposite direction, the rider asks the horse to move forward. The same aids are used if the horse is first brought to the halt, except that the horse is brought to the halt first, however, with both reins and legs. A complete turn on the forehand can also be practiced away from the wall.

The turn on the haunches, on the other hand, is a bona fide dressage movement. At first a half turn is executed along a wall much like the turn on the forehand. Later, a complete turn on the haunches is executed away from the wall.

When the turn on the haunches is executed against a wall, it can, as the turn on the forehand, be performed with or without a full halt preceding it (Figure 8-16). If the horse is travelling against the wall of the arena with the off side to the inside the rider can execute a half turn on the haunches

without bringing the horse to the halt as follows: The rider bends the horse appropriately so the head and tail will lead the movement. The left rein executes a half halt. As soon as the horse responds, the left rein and left leg help the horse begin the movement. The horse is kept bent so that the head and tail lead the movement. The weight of the rider is on the inside (right) hip. The right rein helps to lead the horse around. The right leg on the girth (after the horse's training is well established) helps maintain the impulsion and rhythm of the movement. After the horse has executed the half turn the rider can ask the horse to walk on. The exercise from the halt is performed in a like manner but first starts with a transition to the halt. The turn on the haunches is also called the pirouette at the walk. The turn on the haunches often falls apart in that the hind legs sometimes pivot and are not picked up at each sequence of walk. This problem is greatly avoided when riders practice more passade than turn on the haunches, and leave the pirouette at the walk for competition. This is not to say that riders should not periodically practice the turn on the haunches.

The turn on the haunches can be executed away from the wall (Figure 8-17). One international rider has developed a movement sequence where the horse goes from pirouette walk to pirouette canter. This is truly a beautiful movement.

SUMMARY

In this article we have introduced the horse to preliminary work on two tracks both on the ground and mounted. The objective of these exercises is to further engage the hindquarters of the horse. We examined the leg yield head to the wall, tail to wall, off a half circle and on a full circle. The horse's forward motion is partially halted as the horse moves sideways on two tracks. The easiest of all work on two tracks is the leg yield head to the wall, as the wall acts as a barrier to the natural forward movement. If the rider requires an angle that is too open at the leg yield, the horse may lose impulsion and lose rhythm and possibly come to a stop.

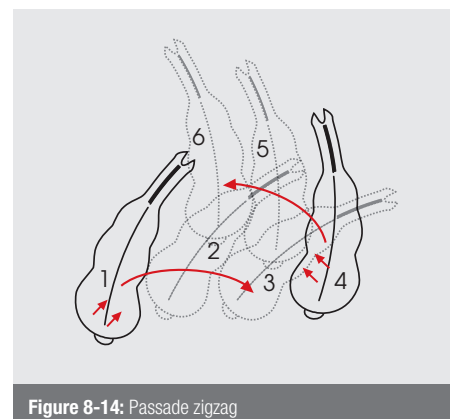


Figure 8-14: Passade zigzag

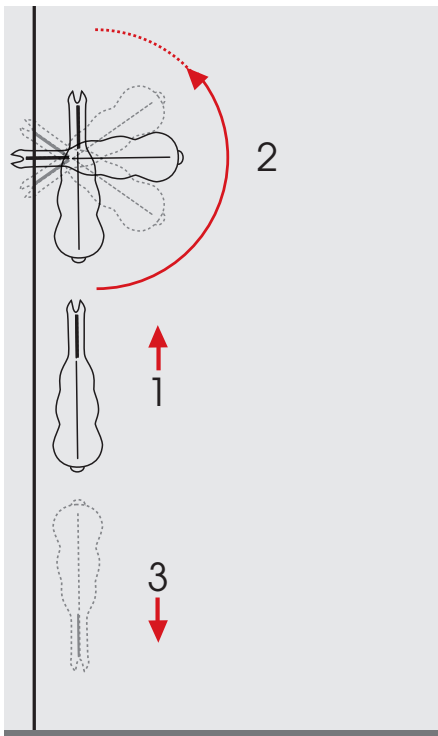


Figure 8-15: Turn on the forehand to the left

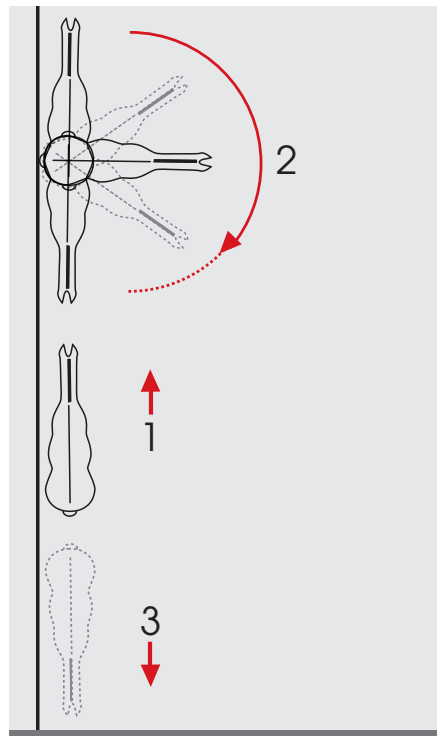


Figure 8-16: Turn on the haunches to the right

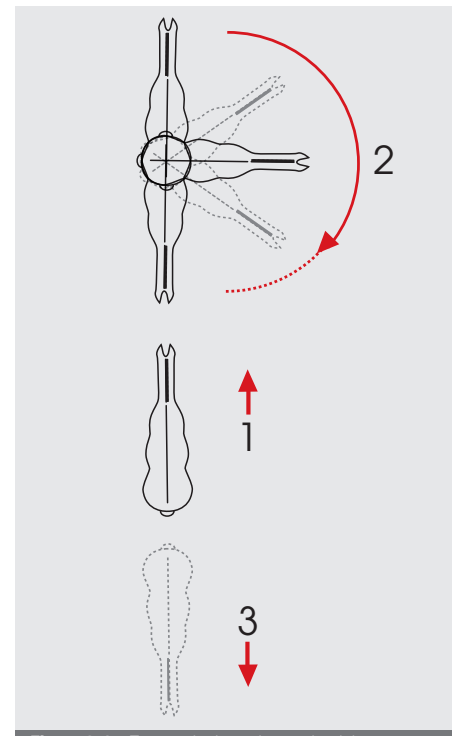


Figure 8-17: Turn on the haunches to the right, away from the wall

If the angle is too closed the horse will not cross the hindquarters. The rider asks the horse to move laterally with the inside aids, which will be those that are away from the movement and the position and angle are controlled by the outside rein and leg (the horse will be moving in that direction). It does not really matter where the arena is in determining the inside or outside but, rather, it is the horse's bend that is considered.

The inside leg is used in such a way that the

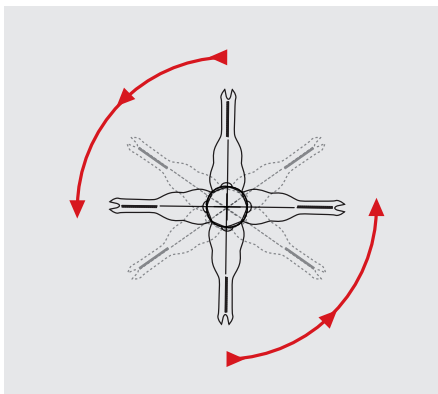


Figure 8-18: Full turn on the haunches to the left

horse learns to move away from lighter and lighter aids. The inside rein is used by gentle, slow tugs directed toward the horse's outside hip. These should never degenerate into pulls, nor should they be necessary at every stride. In fact, no aids should continue to be applied as a general rule, once the horse has responded to what the rider desires. If the rider continues to apply non-needed aids, then the horse will not learn to respond to lighter aids.

While the leg yield involves movement with the horse bent away from the direction of movement, the *passade* involves work with the horse bent so head and tail are bent toward the direction of movement instead of away. In contrast to the leg yield, the *passade* is always executed at the walk.

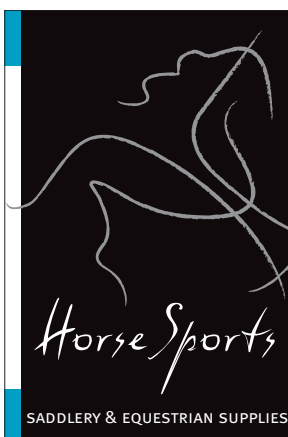
In the *passade* the rider feels the full crossing and engagement of the hindquarters. As the horse becomes more supple and obedient the *passade* can also be obtained by obtaining a bend of the head with the inside rein set against the neck of the horse and asking for the sideways movement with the outside leg. The outside rein can be used lightly and as needed. The horse becomes so light that is possible to almost continue on the *passade* solely with these diagonal aids and pressure on the inside riding bone.

The turn on the forehand can be executed as the rider executes a half halt with the outside rein.

As the horse responds to the half halt the rider asks the horse to move away from the inside leg with both the left leg and rein. The outside rein supports the horse's movement and prevents the horse from moving forward. The outside leg behind the girth helps regulate the speed and rhythm of the exercise. As soon as the horse has finished taking all the required steps and is facing the opposite direction, the rider asks the horse to move forward.

In the turn on the haunches, the rider bends the horse appropriately so the head and tail will lead the movement. The outside rein executes a half halt. As soon as the horse responds, the outside rein and leg help the horse begin the movement. The horse is kept bent so that the head and tail lead the movement. The weight of the rider is on the inside hip. The inside rein helps to lead the horse around. The inside leg on the girth helps maintain the impulsion and rhythm of the movement. After the horse has executed the movement, the rider asks the horse to move forward. The turn on the haunches is also called the *pirouette* at the walk.

So, from this introduction to basic lateral work, you can look forward to more correctness in your eventual advanced work on two tracks along with extension and collection.



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